

ABROAD

PARIS

Those Pyrénées

"The Pyrénées no longer exist," trumpeted Louis XIV when his grandson became king of Spain, and after the recent visit of King Juan Carlos to Paris to sign a protocol of friendship and cooperation, the *bon mot* was recalled in a headline: "The Pyrénées no longer exist—almost." The newspaper *Le Monde* went on to acclaim the provisions of the agreement, which calls for regular consultation across the board, as not only a sign of bilateral harmony but also an enhancement of Spain's new membership in the European Common Market. This smoothing out of Franco-Spanish relations should end a period of suspicion occasioned in particular by French sanctuary for Basque terrorists. The fact that the French authorities have recently extradited three men sought by Spain and have removed "undesirable guests," i.e., Spanish Basques who have crossed over into France, from the departments along the frontier has appeased anger in Madrid. To this process, the amiable personality of the king and his political success at home have contributed much, the paper added, hoping it would signify the end of a long period of coolness, during which, "ever since the Napoleonic wars, the two countries have confronted each other like two porcelain dogs." The "almost" in the headline, however, refers to the fact that Spain has proved resistant to certain French commercial contracts, notably for the Airbus passenger plane, the Mirage fighter, and French subway technology.

SEOUL

Olympics—Once and Future

The Communist regime of North Korea is trying to muscle in on the Olympic Games scheduled to be held in this capital of South Korea in 1988 and has bluntly proposed that it co-host the event. The proposal includes a demand that there be only one team representing both halves of Korea, separated for forty years, since the end of the Second World War. The staging of the Olympic Games has become the one immediate national objective of the South Korean government, and this proposal does not make things easier. Seoul itself had previously made suggestions concerning a unified Korean team, but they came to nothing. A similar attempt before the Los Angeles games of last year led to an impasse. At the same time, the South Korean Olympic Organizing Committee has gone on record against the holding of some of the athletic events in North Korea as impractical.

SOFIA

In the Balkans

The Turkish minority in Bulgaria, some 900,000 people, or one-tenth of the population, has suddenly ceased to be Turkish. This change, effected by the substitution of Bulgarian names for Turkish ones, has taken place over the last few months without much outside knowledge. But while the Communist regime here claims that the change was "spontaneous," other reports indicate it was accompanied by violence and humiliation. There has been a considerable number of Turks living in Bulgaria ever since this part of the Balkan peninsula was conquered six centuries ago by

the Ottoman Empire. When Bulgaria became independent in 1908, Turks living within its new frontiers were recognized as an official minority and accorded schools run in their own language. In recent years, however, the Bulgarian authorities have refused to confirm the existence of an ethnic Turkish group in the country, and the "Bulgarianization" process has been carried out in secrecy. Reports from Ankara speak of troops occupying recalcitrant Turkish communities, and even of rapes and deaths as local Turks resisted. The official explanation of the "adoption" of Slavic names is that the Turks are really the descendants of "Islamized" Bulgars who finally agreed to set history straight. No one knows why the authorities chose this moment to force through their name-changing program. Some believe it was because of Bulgarian involvement in the attempted assassination of the Pope by a Turkish gunman.

RABAT

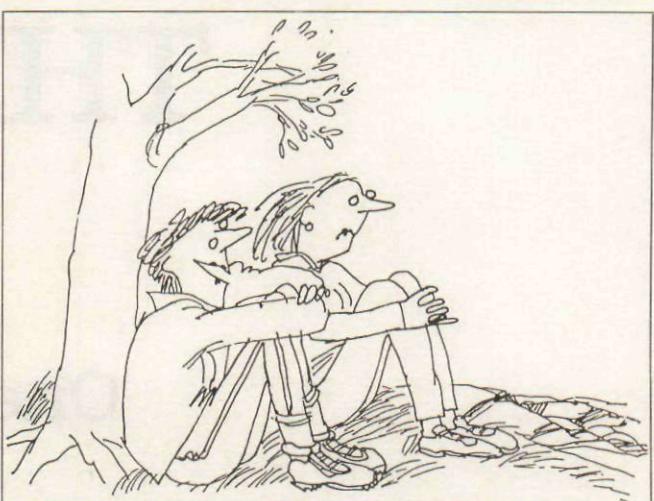
Loose Ends

The winding down of the Anglo-Spanish conflict over Gibraltar (British and Spanish airlines have just agreed to share the Rock's commercial traffic, for example) has brought other loose ends of history to the fore. They consist of Morocco's claim to the two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, which Spain retained from its old territory of Spanish Morocco when that country regained independence thirty years ago. The two cities, situated on Morocco's Mediterranean coast, are of no great economic importance. But inevitably they are a reminder of colonial days. It has always been understood that the Spanish government would turn its attention to this problem as soon as Gibraltar was solved. The view here is that it will be on the international agenda before long.

LONDON

Farewell and "Good-Bye"

The bright red telephone box, as familiar a symbol of London as the bowler hat or the double-decker bus, is fast disappearing and will soon be gone forever. Only a token preservation of the species will recall one of the most distinctive street features of the metropolis. The boxes, designed by the great revivalist architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, are Georgian in character with a domed roof. They are being replaced by plain glass rectangles accented in canary yellow and described as "in the American style."



Harper, *Punch* / Rothko

"I never feel I'm really in the country until I see a nuclear base."

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